DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
Intelligence Information Handling Committee

IIC/MM 79-08
5 April 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, Security Committee

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FROM:
Chairman, DCI Intelligence Information
Handling Committee

SUBJECT: Security Review of Handling of Microforms
within the Intelligence Community

REFERENCE: Memo from Chairman, DCI/IIC dtd 12 June 1978,
same subject

1. In accordance with the reference memo, the Intelligence Community agencies (CIA, DIA, NSA, Air Force, Army, Navy, and State) completed phase one of a detailed review by internal agency staffs of currently practiced security procedures and practices involving microforms. The review was to determine to what extent the handling of microforms of intelligence documents met the requirements of Executive Order 12065, related implementation directives, and the NSC directive governing classification, declassification, downgrading, and safeguarding of national security information.

2. The reviews dealt with the nature of the medium and the security aspects involved in the transmission, storage, reproduction, utilization and destruction of microforms. The findings of the reviews within the various agencies were nearly in total agreement. The following are the most serious of the problems for which the working group found no ready solutions:

a. It was unanimously agreed that the basic security problem of microforms stems from their small size and high degree of data compaction. The accidental removal or surreptitious use of microform documents is and must continue to be a concern to all. While this fundamental issue should be confronted by the Security Committee, it should be noted that the underlying problem is not unique to microforms and any proposed controls should be no more stringent than those required of other sophisticated data handling systems.

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b. Routine destruction of microforms was also cited as a problem. The only certain method of destruction for all types of film is burning. This is effective for small quantities; but since the film bases have a very high kindling point, destruction requires a fire that is fueled by a substance other than the film. Thus, large quantities are difficult to handle. A concomitant problem is the large volume of toxic smoke produced by the film itself. Certain chemicals are effective for destroying images on some types of film but the working group found that there is no single chemical commercially available which is capable of destroying images on all types of microfilm (i.e., silver halide, diazo, or vesicular). Similarly, pulverizers suitable for destroying paper documents are not considered effective for destruction of microforms, especially those which have been reduced more than 100 times standard print size.

c. Nearly all agencies reported difficulty in complying with accounting procedures for microfiche copies of controlled documents requiring copy numbers. The use of copy numbers on microfiche copies of controlled documents involves technical problems, especially in a high volume production operation. In spite of an extensive review of commercially available systems, no agency knows of a device suitable for this application.

3. Other problems include:

a. Ambiguities which exist in current regulations with respect to procedures for handling documents. For example, paragraph 4-404 of Executive Order 12065 states "paper copies . . . of TS documents are subject to copy number and distribution controls." No mention is made of microfilm versions of paper documents, although it is assumed that they are expected to be subject to the same kind of security controls as paper documents.

b. Handling procedures that are either technically infeasible or extremely costly when applied to microforms. For example, the requirement to re-mark a document to reflect new downgrading, declassification, and upgrading instructions. To accomplish this would require re-marking the original document, re-filming it, distributing it to the original addressees with instructions to destroy the outdated copy along with its reproductions.

4. As a result of the security problems which are inherent in the handling of microforms, and the lack of known means of dealing with them, the working group recommends that:

a. The physical security problem cited in subparagraph 2(a), which concerns the problem of small size and high degree of data compaction involved in microforms, be considered by the Security Committee as a matter of priority to develop recommendations for specific application to the microform environment.

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   b. The Security Committee investigate further the security problems cited in subparagraphs 2(b) and (c) regarding the destruction of microforms and accountability and control procedures using contractor assistance as necessary.

   c. The Security Committee and the IHC work jointly to review procedures outlined in the various security documents in detail to clarify requirements which are meant to apply to microforms as well as paper documents, as described in subparagraphs 3(a) and (b) of this memorandum. Where procedures are determined to apply to microforms as well as paper documents, the two Committees should in each case provide guidance as to how those requirements should be met.

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